

CLAIMS

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

- 1 1. A method for establishing a distribution network, comprising:
2 establishing a first distributor of content capable of distributing said
3 content via transmission of an electronic signal; and
4 providing a first benefit to said first distributor as a result of said first
5 distributor establishing a second distributor of said content.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said establishing a first distributor of content
2 capable of distributing said content via transmission of an electronic signal includes at
3 least one of the following:
4 providing a notification of availability of said benefit to said first
5 distributor;
6 receiving a request from said first distributor to act as a distributor of said
7 content;
8 registering said first distributor as part of a distribution network for said
9 content;
10 receiving approval from a provider of said content to allow said first
11 distributor to act as a distributor of said content;
12 granting a license to said first distributor to act as a distributor of said
13 content; and
14 providing data to said first distributor indicative of said benefit.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 providing said content to said first distributor.

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said providing said content to said first
2 distributor includes at least one of the following:

- 3 emailing said content to said first distributor;
- 4 instructing another distributor in said network to provide said content to
- 5 said first distributor;
- 6 allowing said first distributor to retrieve said content;
- 7 providing data to said first distributor indicative of a location where said
- 8 content is located;
- 9 providing data to said first distributor indicative of a location where said
- 10 content can be retrieved by said first distributor;
- 11 providing a key to said first distributor that enables use of said content;
- 12 and
- 13 providing a key to said first distributor that enables decryption of said
- 14 content.

1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein said providing a first benefit to said first
2 distributor includes at least one of the following:

- 3 providing an indication to said first distributor of said first benefit;
- 4 applying the first benefit during a transaction involving said first
- 5 distributor;
- 6 providing an instruction to a party to provide said first benefit to said first
- 7 distributor; and
- 8 providing instructions to said first distributor regarding how said first
- 9 distributor can receive said first benefit.

1 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

- 2 providing said first distributor with a second benefit as a result of said
- 3 second distributor establishing a third distributor of said content.

1 7. The method of claim 6, further comprising:
2 providing said second distributor with a benefit as a result of said second
3 distributor establishing a third distributor of said content.

1 8. The method of claim 6, wherein said third distributor receives said content from
2 said first distributor.

1 9. The method of claim 6, wherein said third distributor receives said content from
2 said second distributor.

1 10. The method of claim 1, wherein said second distributor is capable of distributing
2 said content via transmission of an electronic signal.

1 11. The method of claim 1, wherein said content is in electronic format.

1 12. The method of claim 1, wherein said content includes at least one of the
2 following:

3 educational information;
4 an advertisement;
5 a survey;
6 a question;
7 an animation;
8 a sound file;
9 a music file;
10 a real-time feed of information;
11 streaming video;
12 streaming audio;
13 a movie file;
14 software;

15 a video clip;
16 a multimedia file;
17 an image;
18 text material; and
19 rich media.

1 13. The method of claim 1, wherein said first benefit is based, at least in part, on at
2 least one of the following:
3 an amount per distribution of said content by said first distributor to
4 another distributor;
5 an amount per distribution of said content by said second distributor;
6 an amount of content distributed by said second distributor;
7 an type of content distributed by said second distributor;
8 storage capacity of said second distributor;
9 physical location of said second distributor;
10 availability of said second distributor; and
11 amount of access of said second distributor by potential recipients of said
12 content.

1 14. The method of claim 1, wherein said first benefit is based, at least in part, on at
2 least one of the following:
3 an amount of content distributed by said first distributor;
4 a type of content distributed by said first distributor;
5 storage capacity of said first distributor;
6 physical location of said first distributor;
7 availability of said first distributor;
8 amount of access of said first distributor by potential recipients of said
9 content; and

10 an amount per distribution of said content by said first distributor to a
11 recipient of said content.

1 15. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 allowing said first distributor to provide said content to said second
3 distributor.

1 16. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving said content.

1 17. The method of claim 1, wherein said first distributor is part of a network of at
2 least one distributor for said content.

1 18. The method of claim 1, wherein said first benefit includes at least one of the
2 following:

3 a monetary amount;
4 a discount applicable towards purchase of said content;
5 a discount applicable towards a cost of a license to use said content;
6 a non-monetary amount;
7 a coupon; and
8 frequent flyer miles.

1 19. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 providing to said first distributor an indication of a desired attribute for a
3 new distributor of said content.

1 20. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 determining at least one desired attribute for a new distributor of said
3 content.

- 1 21. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 determining at least one attribute of said content.
- 1 22. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 notifying said first distributor of an availability of said first benefit prior to
3 said establishing a first distributor of content.
- 1 23. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 notifying said first distributor of an availability of said first benefit prior to
3 said providing a benefit to said first distributor as a result of said first distributor
4 establishing a second distributor of said content.
- 1 24. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 providing said content to said second distributor.
- 1 25. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving a notification from said first distributor that said first distributor
3 has established said second distributor.
- 1 26. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 monitoring performance of said first distributor.
- 1 27. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 monitoring performance of said second distributor.
- 1 28. The method of claim 1, further comprising at least one of the following:
2 receiving a payment for said content from a recipient of said content;
3 receiving a payment for said content from said first distributor; and
4 receiving a payment for said content from said second distributor.

1 29. A method for participating in a distribution network, comprising:
2 establishing at least one distributor of content; and
3 receiving a benefit based, at least in part, on said establishing at least one
4 distributor of said content.

1 30. The method of claim 29, further comprising:
2 receiving said content.

1 31. The method of claim 30, wherein said receiving said content includes at least one
2 of the following:
3 receiving said content via transmission of an electronic signal;
4 receiving said content via transmission of a wireless signal;
5 receiving said content from another distributor of said content;
6 receiving data indicative of a location where said content is located;
7 receiving data indicative of a location from which said content is
8 retrievable; and
9 receiving a key that enables decryption of said content.

1 32. The method of claim 29, wherein said establishing at least one distributor of said
2 content includes at least one of the following:
3 receiving a request from a party to act as a distributor of said content;
4 registering said at least one distributor as part of a distribution network for
5 said content;
6 receiving approval from a provider of said content to allow said at least
7 one distributor to act as a distributor of said content;
8 granting a license to said at least one distributor to act as a distributor of
9 said content; and
10 providing data to said at least one distributor indicative of said benefit.

- 1 33. The method of claim 29, further comprising:
2 providing an identifier of said content to said at least one distributor.
- 1 34. The method of claim 29, further comprising:
2 providing said content to said at least one distributor.
- 1 35. The method of claim 34, wherein said providing said content to said at least one
2 distributor includes at least one of the following:
3 instructing another distributor in said network to provide said content to
4 said at least one distributor;
5 allowing said at least one distributor to retrieve said content;
6 providing data to said at least one distributor indicative of a location where
7 said content is located;
8 providing a key to said at least one distributor that enables use of said
9 content; and
10 providing a key to said at least one distributor that enables decryption of
11 said content.
- 1 36. The method of claim 29, wherein said receiving a benefit based, at least in part,
2 on said establishing at least one distributor of said content includes at least one of the
3 following:
4 receiving an indication of a location of said benefit;
5 receiving a description of said benefit; and
6 receiving instructions how to receive said benefit.
- 1 37. The method of claim 29, further comprising:
2 providing to said at least one distributor an indication of a desired attribute
3 for a new distributor of said content.

- 1 38. The method of claim 29, further comprising:
2 determining at least one desired attribute for a new distributor of said
3 content.
- 1 39. The method of claim 29, further comprising:
2 determining at least one attribute of said content.
- 1 40. The method of claim 29, further comprising:
2 receiving data indicative of at least one desired attribute for a new
3 distributor of said content.
- 1 41. The method of claim 29, further comprising:
2 receiving a notification indicative of availability of said benefit.
- 1 42. The method of claim 29, further comprising:
2 providing a notification upon said establishing at least one distributor of
3 said content that said at least one distributor has been established.
- 1 43. The method of claim 29, further comprising:
2 monitoring performance of said at least one distributor.
- 1 44. The method of claim 29, further comprising:
2 receiving payment for said content from a recipient of said content.
- 1 45. The method of claim 29, further comprising:
2 receiving payment for said content from said at least one distributor.
- 1 46. The method of claim 29, further comprising:
2 providing payment for said content to another party.

- 1 47. The method of claim 29, wherein said content is in an electronic format.
- 1 48. A method for maintaining a distribution network, comprising:
2 determining a requirement of a network for distribution of content,
3 wherein said content is in electronic form and said network includes at least one
4 distributor of said content;
5 determining at least one desired attribute for a distributor of said content,
6 wherein said attribute is based, at least in part, on said requirement; and
7 providing an indication of said desired attribute.
- 1 49. The method of claim 48, wherein said requirement includes at least one of the
2 following:
3 a current requirement for said network to respond to requests for said
4 content;
5 a current requirement for said network to provide said content to at least
6 one recipient;
7 a current requirement for said network to store said content;
8 a future requirement for said network to respond to requests for said
9 content;
10 a future requirement for said network to provide said content to at least
11 one recipient;
12 a future requirement for said network to store said content;
13 a current minimum delivery requirement associated with said content;
14 a current minimum storage requirement associated with said content;
15 an expected minimum delivery requirement associated with said content;
16 and
17 an expected minimum storage requirement associated with said content.

1 50. The method of claim 48, wherein said requirement includes at least one of
2 the following:

3 a minimum level of ability of a distributor in said network to transmit said
4 content;

5 a minimum level of ability of a distributor in said network to store said
6 content;

7 a minimum percentage of availability of a distributor in said network;

8 a minimum amount of accessibility of a distributor in said network of said
9 content by a potential recipient of said content;

10 a minimum storage capability of a distributor in said network;

11 a specific physical location of a distributor in said network;

12 a specific topological location of a distributor in said network;

13 a specific configuration of hardware used by a distributor in said network
14 of said content;

15 a minimum transmission capability of a distributor in said network;

16 a minimum satisfaction level associated with at least one recipient of said
17 content from a distributor in said network;

18 a minimum level of ability by a distributor in said network to respond to
19 requests from potential recipients of said content; and

20 a minimum number of distributions of said content by a distributor in said
21 network.

1 51. The method of claim 48, wherein said determining at least one desired attribute
2 for a distributor of said content includes at least one of the following:

3 determining an attribute that will help said network meet said requirement
4 if a distributor having said attribute is added to said network; and

5 determining an attribute that will help said network meet said requirement
6 if a distributor already in said network develops said attribute.

1 52. The method of claim 48, wherein said attribute includes at least one of the
2 following:

- 3 an affiliation with a designated organization;
- 4 a minimum mobility characteristic;
- 5 a minimum processing capability;
- 6 a designated hardware configuration;
- 7 a designated software configuration;
- 8 a minimum reliability level;
- 9 a minimum operational characteristic;
- 10 a minimum availability to a potential recipient of said content;
- 11 a minimum accessibility by a potential recipient of said content;
- 12 a minimum storage capability;
- 13 a physical location;
- 14 a topological location;
- 15 a minimum transmission capability; and
- 16 a minimum bandwidth.

1 53. The method of claim 48, further comprising:

2 providing a benefit to a distributor in said network that develops said
3 attribute.

1 54. The method of claim 48, further comprising:

2 providing a benefit to a party that establishes a distributor in said network
3 that has said attribute.

1 55. The method of claim 48, further comprising:

2 providing a notification of a benefit available to a party that establishes a
3 distributor in said network that has said attribute.

1 56. A system for establishing at least one distributor of content, comprising:
2 a memory;
3 communication port; and
4 a processor connected to said memory and said communication port, said
5 processor being operative to:
6 establish a first distributor of content capable of distributing said
7 content via transmission of an electronic signal; and
8 provide a benefit to said first distributor as a result of said first
9 distributor establishing a second distributor of said content.

1 57. A system for establishing at least one distributor of content, comprising:
2 a memory;
3 communication port; and
4 a processor connected to said memory and said communication port, said
5 processor being operative to:
6 establish a distributor of content capable of distributing said
7 content via transmission of an electronic signal; and
8 receive a benefit as a result of said establishing a distributor of said
9 content.

1 58. A computer program product in a computer readable medium for rewarding a
2 distributor of content, comprising:
3 first instructions for determining a first distributor of content capable of
4 distributing said content via transmission of an electronic signal; and
5 second instructions for sending a first benefit to said first distributor as a
6 result of said first distributor establishing a second distributor of said content.